



Historical Perspective of Saint Poet Sri Jayadev

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The Ganga King ruled over Kalinga from the 6th Century to 11th Century A.D. At that time Kalinga was restricted by river Rusikulya in the north and Simhachal hills in the south. At the centre of Kalinga was the Mahendragiri range of hills. The Mathar Kings who ruled over Kalinga before the Gangas had Singhapur as their Capital. But after the fall of Mathar dynasty the Ganga kings established their Capital at Kalinga Nagar on the bank of river Vamsadhara. To-day it is located in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh known as Nagari Katak.

Very close to this place is a place known as Mukhalingam in which the Madhukeswar Siva temple was constructed in the 10th century A.D. by Madhukamarnava Deva a Ganga king. His son Vajrahasta Deva did quite a lot of development works for the temple and laid down all the rites and rituals for worship of the deity. From copper plate issued by him it is known that he had brought a number of families adept in dance from Baidumba kingdom which was the home of the maternal uncle of Vajrahasta Deva. These families gradually increased in number and the king settled them in a village called Srikurumapatak at the distance of 19km from Kalinga Nagar on the sea coast. There is a Vishnu temple there enshrining Srikuruma Avatar (Tortoise incarnation of Visnu). The

Vaishnavites who came from southern India taught Sanskrit literature, philosophy and religious texts to the students in this place. There was also a school for music and dance at Srikurumapatak for the dancing girls and boys. The temple dancers were called Sani.

The Ganga Kings ruled over Kalinga for about 400 years and then Chodaganga Deva was born to Maharaja Devendravarma Rajaraja Deva and queen Rajasundari who was the daughter of the Chola King of Kanchi named Maharaja Kulatunga Rajendra Chola the Second. Rajasundari had two sons namely, Cholaganga Deva and Pamardy. When Rajaraja Deva died prematurely in 1077 A.D., Cholaganga Deva was only 5 year old and Paramardy, the second son was only 3 year old.

Kalinga was thus without a ruler. The neighbouring states wanted to occupy Kalinga. In order to save the kingdom and the two kids from the enemies Rajasundari the widowed queen desperately sought the help of her brother Virachoda who was ruling over the Bengi Kingdom. Virachoda accepted the request, came to Kalinga Nagar and organised the coronation of the child Cholaganga Deva. He got his own kid daughter Gundichodi, later on known as Kasturikamodini, married to Cholaganga Deva and proclaimed that Kalinga

was not without a ruler. Virachoda was a brave and intelligent king himself. He engaged teachers of high caliber for the education of his daughter and the son-in-law. Cholaganga Deva, later led a huge army and started a series of campaign against the neighbouring enemy kingdoms.

Situated to the east of Kalinga was Utkal which was ruled at that time by the Somavansi king Karnadeva. Cholaganga attacked Utkal. With this battle for the conquest of Utkal, the Somavansa got eliminated. Cholaganga then defeated Chalukya King of Bengi and also defeated Pala King of Bangal at Mandargada and Armanagar, at present known as Arambag. He extended his Kingdom Kalinga from Godavari in the south-west to Ganga in the north-east. In 1112 A.D. he shifted his capital from Kalinga Nagar to Varanasi Katak which is at present known as Bidanasi. From Deopara copper plate inscription it is known that Vijayasena prided himself as a friend of Cholaganga.

Since it took some time to bring about peace and stability in the conquered territories of Utkal and Banga, Cholaganga alongwith his family stayed in Kalinga Nagar upto 1126 A.D. and then shifted to Varanasi Katak after restoration of peace and stability. In 1050 Sakabda (1128 A.D.) his first year of reign was declared to be counted as found from an inscription in Nrusingha temple near Mukti Mandap at Srimandir. Cholaganga assumed the title of *Parama Maheswara*, *Parama Vaisnava* and *Parama Brahmanya*. He was initially a Saiva and later on became Vaisnava. His Saiva Guru was a Sadhu in Madhukeswar temple and his Vaisnav Guru was from Vishnu temple of Kurumapatak.

Cholaganga Deva organised the coronation of his eldest son Sri Kamarnava

Deva at Sri Purusottama Temple of Puri and stayed in his palace at Puri for the rest of his life. This was in the year 1142 A.D. Cholaganga Deva started the construction of the present Jagannath Temple at Puri. At the coronation function temple dancers from Sri Kurumapatak were called to perform dance at the Lord Jagannath Temple. This sect was known as Sani sect. As found out from the temple inscriptions at Madhukeswar temple and Simanchal Temple, the Ganga Kings had encouraged this tradition of temple dancers in the kingdom of Kalinga, and then in the Kalinga empire.

As recorded in an inscription in the Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar, during the reign of Raghava Deva, the second son of Chodaganga Deva, all the land rights for a region called *Baheda Khanda* were purchased from Sadhu Pradhan Jayadeva of Kurmapataka and donated to Kirtivaswar (Lord Lingaraj) by Medam Devi, her father Komi Nayaka and her mother. The three of them had donated three *Akhanda Dipas* (arrangements for non-stop burning of oil-lamps) to the temple. They belonged to the Sani sect.

A similar inscription appears on Madhukeswar temple at Mukhalingam where Komi Nayak, father of Medam Devi and his wife Nagama Devi (Title of *Gudisani* meaning Temple Dancer) arranged for offering an *akhanda deepa* in the temple in 1113 A.D.

There is yet another inscription in the said Madhukeswar temple inwhich they had offered *akhanda deepa* in 1128 A.D. The system of providing *Akhanda Dipa* and donating rights of land to the deities appears to be common in the three events in 1113, 1128 and 1156 A.D. The presence of Jayadeva and his description as *Kurmapataka Pravara* establishes that he had close lineage with the

dancing families of Kurmapataka who had come to Orissa during the period of Chodaganga Deva. had the *Gudi Sanis* (temple actors and dancers) been socially looked down upon, then their donations to temples could not have been accepted and immortalized in inscriptions. The two inscriptions at Madhukeswar temple and the one at Simhachal temple were discovered, read and interpreted by Dr. Satyanarayan Rajaguru, the Pitamaha Bhisma of historians and linguists of Orissa. Read with the inscription at Lingaraj temple, it leads to the conclusion that Jayadeva had been a member of the teaching faculty of the school at Srikurmapatak. He might have studied there as well. After his childhood education he must have gone to Srikurmapataka and gained experience in composition of poetry and music and in dancing. He perhaps came back to Orissa alongwith the group and performed in the Puri temple.

Sri Jayadeva, the celebrated Poet of Gitagovinda was born in the village Kenduvilva Sasan or Kenduli Sasan in Balipatna P.S. in Khurda district, a part of the earlier Puri district. He was most likely born in the first part of 12th Century A.D. during the reign of Chodaganga Deva. Kenduli Sasan close to the river Prachi then was inhabited mostly by Brahmins. The presiding deity in the village is Ambika and there is a Nrusingha temple as well. Jayadeva must have gone for higher education in Sanskrit literature and music to Kurmapataka and after education he must have become a tutor there. That is why the two titles '*Kurmapataka Pravara*' and '*Sadhu Pradhan*' have been mentioned against him in the Lingaraj Temple inscription. Read together the three inscriptions indicate to the fact of close association of Jayadeva to the family of Komi Nayaka and to the institution at Kurmapataka.

Prachi valley witnessed the rise and spread of Jainism, Buddhism, Saivism, Saktism, Sun cult and Vaisnavism. Kenduvilva and many other villages nearby are full of religious monuments dedicated to different cults. Numerous temples were erected by Bhaumas, Somavanshis and the Gangas in the Prachi valley. Village Kenduli Sasan has rich relics of brick and stone temples and sculptures of Saiva, Vaisnav and Sakta cults as well as Buddhism belonging to the period between 9th and 13th Century A.D. In Prachi Valley whether the temple has a Sakta or Saiva deity, Gitagovinda is recited on festive occasions which symbolise the influence of Vaisnavism over Saktism and the immense popularity of the text of Gitagovinda.

The copper plate grant of Nrusingha Deva the 4th which was recovered from a tank near the Nrusingha temple of Kenduli village, was originally issued from Varanasi Katak in A.D. 1383. It refers to establishment of Narasinghpur Sasan donated to one Mahapatra Narahari Das Praharaj who was the minister of Narasingha Deva. This Sasan is located very close to Kenduvilva on Prachi valley. This grant also contains the names of Olatapura and Attahaspura Sasan adjacent to Kenduli established by Attahasdeva, the youngest son of Chodaganga Deva.

To quote Dr. Harish Chandra Das

"While discussing about the historical background of Jayadeva it will perhaps not be out of place to glance through how he introduced Radha and Mahava and *dasavatara* cult in the most popular manner breaking the stylized tradition. From this point of view *Gitagovinda* is virtually a historical text unfurling the historical truth through his poetic narration. The cult of Madhava which is historically proved to be in existence in Orissa

from seventh or eighth century A.D. gained great momentum from the time of Jayadeva. The first epigraphical evidence of Madhava, we come across in the copper plate grant of Madhavaraja of the Sailodbhava dynasty, where the scribe has particularized the epithet of Chakrayudha Madhava. The image of Nilamadhava installed by the Bhanja monarch at Gandharadi (ninth century A.D.) comes next in order of chronology. The image of Santosa Madhava recorded to in the copper plate grant of Indravarman Codaganga, Madhava in the pillar inscriptions of Rellivalasa at Srikakulam, numerous Madhava sculptures and temples in Prachi valley are clear revelation of the long-continued tradition of Madhava worship in Orissa with wide distribution in Prachi valley, the birth place of Jayadeva who in course of his wanderings and as a devout worshipper of Madhava infused exuberantly in his *Gitagovinda* the lucid description of Madhava, his deity of love and admiration."

Sri Jayadeva introduced the cult of Radha and Krishna through his *Gitagovinda* and due to the influence of *Shrimad Bhagavata* and *Gitagovinda* and the composite figure of Krishna and Vishnu as Gopinath became very popular in Orissa. When Vaisnavism became the state religion of Orissa the composite sculpture of Krishna and Vishnu with upper two hands in the pose of playing the flute, standing in *Tribhanga* associated with *Astagopi* and cattle which is the characteristic feature of Krishna, indicates the amalgamation of two cults at a time. The long continued tradition of *Dasavatara* had a deep imprint on Sri Jayadeva who popularised the 10 Avatars of Vishnu in lucid language, which would be put to music and dance.

To quote Dr. Harish Chandra Das again

"That the concept of ten incarnations of Visnu was widely prevalent in Orissa since

seventh century A.D. is substantiated by literary and archaeological evidences. In this connection mention may be made of Varaha worship referred to in the copper plate of Dharmaraja of the Sailodbhava dynasty and other individual and collective images particularly in coastal Orissa which speak in short the prevalence of *dasavatara worship* in Orissa before the advent of Jayadeva. Jayadeva in his composition (*dasakrtikrte*) has shown the greatness of Lord Visnu in his ten incarnations individually.

It was Sri Jayadeva who institutionalised the *Devadasi* system introduced from the time of Somavansi Kings. *Devadasis* or *Maharis* were women dedicated to the deity in the temple for performance of dance and music. The importance of this dancing service became so great that a special structure called *Natamandir* was added to the *Viman* and *Jagamohan*."

Madhava Patnaik a Vaishnavite poet was a contemporary of *Panchasakha* and Sri Chaitanya. As is well known, *Panchasakha* refers to Balarama Das, Jagannatha Das, Achyuta Das, Ananta Das and Yashovanta Das, the saint poets of Orissa. Madhava Patnaik has described in detail the events in the later part of life of Shri Chaitanya in Puri. In this book is given a graphic description of the development of Vaishnavism in Orissa.

The following are the facts from this book which clearly mentioned that (i) Chodaganga Deva actually renovated an old temple and started construction of the present Jagannatha temple, and he had conducted in the temple itself the *Abhishek* of crown prince Kamarnava Deva, (ii) On this occasion dancers were called from the South to perform dance and drama in the Puri temple. (iii) A small *Natamandir* was constructed and

arrangements were made for presentation of regular dance and drama by *Maharis* (Temple dancers) in the honour of Lord Jagannatha in the temple during the time of Chodaganga Deva and his son. (iv) Chaitanya after he had arrived at Puri was advised by Pandits to go to Rajamahendri to meet Raya Ramananda who was Governor of this southern province of Orissa. There Chaitanya came to know about *Dvaitavada* and *Advaitavada* from Raya Ramananda (v) Bipra Jayadeva was born in Kenduli Sasan on the bank of river Prachi. He worshipped Madhava at Niali. He was an expert in the *Shastras* and *Puranas*, music and dance. He was a saint poet who composed the *Geeta Govinda* in the temple of Jagannatha at Puri and his wife Padmavati danced to the tunes of Geeta Govinda before Jagannath. (vi) Chaitanya and *Panchasakha* were going on *Sankirtan* Trips to different parts of Orissa for a number of years. One such annual trip started from Ananta Vasudeva temple of Bhubaneswar and ended at Puri touching Balakati-Kenduli-Niali, Madhav, Adaspur, Kakatpur and Konark.

Madhav Patnaik has described as to how Srichaitanya and *Panchasakha* were dancing in *Sankirtan* singing Gitagobinda at Kenduli village which was the birth place of Jayadeva. This book was discovered and compiled from three Palm leaf manuscripts collected in Orissa from three places in the early 1980s.

Gitagovinda of Sri Jayadev, therefore, is accepted as a historical text in addition to its great literary and religious significance. Sri Jayadev initially highlighted and systematised the traditional cults but also introduced his own ideologies, poetic imagery and music. Both Chodaganga Deva and his son Kamarnav were disciples of Ramanuja and devotees of Sri Jagannath and his consort Laxmi. Jayadeva was influenced by Ramanuja's ideology of Jagannath and Laxmi. In *Gitagovinda* Krishna

tells Radha that formerly she as Laxmi chose Him as her consort on the sea shore on the occasion of *Samudra Manthana*. As a result of this incident Siva swallowed poison out of despair. *Gitagovinda* was composed before 1150 A.D. and *Gitagovinda* dance drama was enacted in Puri temple during the rein of Chodaganga Deva and Kamarnavadeva. The earliest reference to Jayadeva outside Orissa was made by poet Chandabaradai, the Court poet of Prithviraj Chauhan who was defeated and killed in 1192 A.D. by Md. Ghoris in the battle of Tirori. The next earliest reference is found in an inscription of Raja Sarangadev in the year 1201 A.D. Therefore, it is established that *Gitagovinda* because of its regular performance in Sri Jagannath temple of Puri assumed popularity throughout India within a brief period of 30-40 years of its composition. It combined the best in the rich traditions of philosophy, literature, music and dance in Kalinga and Utkal. The philosophy was developed later into *Achintya Bheda Bheda Tatwa*, so ably propounded by Raya Ramananda and accepted and immortalized by Sri Chaitanya, *Pancha Sakha* and the *Shad Goswamis*.

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